Build a Great Website and Come Up First on Google: the smartest thing you'll ever do for your business, reputation, and income---Part Two

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Our society, our culture, has immutably and irrevocably joined the Internet revolution. The vast majority of my present clients and certainly all of my future clients do and will "Google"---it's so ubiquitous and powerful it's become a verb---to find a product, service, or piece of information as surely as the sun rises. As a craftsperson (and, hopefully, at the same time raising your

skill level in the **craft** of operating a small business) you certainly can deny or resist this reality, but I believe that will make you an **anachronism**: a relic from a different age. And not in a good way...

On the other hand, if you choose to embrace the moment, and explore the possibilities of the **Web** as one of the best, most personal, most honest and transparent advertising, branding, and marketing tools that exist, it will **pay off** in ways both financial and personal that can be literally beyond your dreams, beyond what you can see for yourself.

Three years ago I started to sell pianos in **Los Angeles** after being a fairly well-known technician there for many years, and my market seemed to be people and entities who wanted to buy **big** (7', 7'6", 9') expensive, highly intentionally manufactured or remanufactured **grand pianos**. I knew I had to draw from a larger geographic area than L.A. I had to be known **nationally**, and the only way I could see to do that was to have a **real good website**, a deep, richwith-text place where you could, with certitude, get a sense of **who I am, where I come from and where I stand**, almost as if you had had a conversation with me. This, actually, was my stated goal---to have a website that would serve the same purpose as personal word-of-mouth: **establishing trust**.

As my colleague and friend Ed Foote so brilliantly states, "We're not selling piano service, or pianos; we're selling trust."

I've seen so many technician's and piano businesses' websites that are the kind that take 20 minutes to set up-usually inside a "free" or ad-supported **mega-site** complete with its **template** for your site---maybe 5 or 6 hours to do the copy, a few **clip-art** downloads, a bad photograph or two, and: voila!

The website of a refined professional.

Hardly.

My friends, the human brain is a wondrous thing: it can actually **tell** whether somebody has put love, time, passion, and thought into something, or whether somebody has just **tossed something off**, gotten it "out of the way," taken the easy road.

Brains, and the whole package that contains them, **are perceptive**. People you want to do **high-end piano work** for are very, very perceptive, and smart, and picky. Their first perception of you is crucially important. Just like when you do your first tuning for a great new client---you want to **blow them away**.

Building your own, custom, deeply authentic and personal website is key. It's the same in advertising as it is in piano work: quality is instantly apparent. And yet so many of us deny this---we think it's OK to show up looking rough around the edges, in a forlorn vehicle, with an old tool bag, home-made business cards, and a thrown-up, assembly-line, inexpensive "quickie" website.

Even though our piano work is excellent and our ethics and craft sense are of the highest caliber.

There's a dissonance there. Can you see it and feel it? People, the world at large, all your potential and future **premium clients**, want to see the same level of craft and attention to detail in **all** of how you represent and explain yourself before they give you their most precious treasure---their trust. The kind of website that you can make for yourself with qualified and practical professional help can

trust and get the first crack at a lot of quality work. To be one of the technicians, or **the** technician, in your community that people describe as the best, "the one to get."

exponentially increase your opportunity to quickly win that

How to do that

First, understand you get what you pay for. If you have HTML with Flash expertise, and have a gift for visual and graphic design in a modern, artisanal, appropriate-to-the-niche context, and are a first-rate, interesting writer---by all means make your own site; it will require a lot less cash, but likely hundreds of hours of concentrated work time, depending on the depth and quality you're aiming for. Remember: the world runs on first perceptions, first looks, snap judgments; they won't give you a second look, and they won't value the knowledge inside of you, if they aren't attracted and reassured pretty much immediately by that first look.

Or: you could get some help. Ask for help. Do some research. Take it seriously. Get some quality personal referrals for Web designers from successful small business owners you know and trust. Look at dozens of piano and other related websites. Use common sense. Hire a professional website designer in your area or that you know of that has done sites that you consider to be goodlooking, easily navigable and well laid-out, with information-rich, intelligent copy, and niche-appropriate tone and feel. Do not make your decision based on price; make it on quality and interest.

It is crucial to have a **very clear idea** of what you want. The best way I found to do this was make a detailed **outline** of every single **area** and **sub-area** I wanted to have on my site. I visualized in my mind the different areas on my site--"Home," "About Us," "Piano Services," and so on, and then broke the areas down into sub-areas. This was done on a

yellow legal pad, by the way.

Don't be **penny-wise** and **pound-foolish**; get your site done by somebody whose work thrills you, who you think is really good, and figure out a way to pay for it. It will **pay for itself** many, many times over if you do it right---if the site feels good, looks good, and tells people **exactly** who you are and what you do. Not in stale "sales" language, but in your own words, in your unique style---as created or edited by a **better writer than you** if necessary.

Don't be afraid of being **creative**, of being just who you are, of letting people know the **strength** of your love and commitment to pianos and the work. I can't stress this enough; stretch past your comfort level on this one. People love it when they feel your passion and commitment; they tend to trust you and want to give you money.

Talk about all the **services** you and your trusted, treasured **colleagues** provide. In my opinion, a piano technician should offer what I call "**complete piano service**" (which is the subject of a whole other article; please go to www.davidandersenpianos.com for a complete explanation.) If your clients trust you, why not provide, by outsourcing piano work to trusted colleagues, everything a client could possibly need concerning pianos through your company? It's a natural thing; good clients expect it.

Be as specific and in-depth as you like. **Photos** by a good photographer are essential. Talk about your philosophy of business. Talk about how you **fell in love** with **music** and pianos. Talk about colleagues who inspire you. Be a **teacher**; people who like pianos and are intelligent

consumers love to be educated. Have your **grateful clients** talk about you some. Make it original. Make it look and feel like how **you** "are," how **you** do business. Put enough energy into your site so that it impresses and "blows away" that person or those persons that love you, support you, and always tell you the truth---your own personal **"review committee."** When you get **them** excited, you're good.

If you work hard at this, commit to it, and get it done, you will be grateful you did it for the rest of your career. For those of you who can understand what I'm saying, there are no good excuses to put this off.

Many of my colleagues have a **barrier** against investing in the **marketing** side of their business---the side that lets **your community**, the geographic area in which you work, know what amazingly good **products** and **services** you have to offer, what **immense value** you bring to each job and client, what a cool human being you are, how you operate in an excellent, **ethical** atmosphere; that marketing that allows the world to perceive you as a **serious professional** worthy of generous compensation. I don't know why they have this barrier, but they do.

I highly encourage you to follow the lead of every single successful business **ever** and market **yourself**, brand **yourself**---in a way that's real, and true, and that you're proud of. Marketing does **not** equal cheesiness or venality. Properly done, it equals **success**, and security for your family. Marketing done right, with common sense, equals a **recession-proof** business you can always be proud of and that always has commercial value because of intense **brand identity**: how people feel about **Google** or **Amazon** or

Pixar. It's a brand you feel good with, a brand you can trust.

The **Piano Technician's Guild** is a highly prized and trusted brand in the world of quality pianos. In **Part Two** of this series, I'll show you and tell you how **you**, and **your business**, and **your team** of colleagues and collaborators, can be the Google, and Amazon, and **PTG** of your city, or county, or area---can be a well-known and trusted brand for "everything piano."

Be prepared to become intimately familiar with this phrase: search engine optimization, or SEO.

In Part Two, we'll explain:

---why a good website is like the Yellow Pages, a great personal referral, an electronic billboard, and a TV show all rolled into one.

---why niche-market (pianos) geography-specific search engine optimization, done by a hired professional or service, is a slam-dunk, guaranteed business builder, relatively inexpensive, and why it should be a lifetime-funded business expense.

And, finally

---some prime examples of exclusively Web-generated piano sales and service from David Andersen Pianos.

I'll just tease you with this: building a good, rich website and then marketing it intelligently has seen a **spectacular** return on investment (what it has cost me so far to build and market my site) for **David Andersen Pianos**. I'll tell you how spectacular next time. Until then, keep breathing and enjoy life.